

ANN HILL RESEARCH

Interview with Mrs Oliver (Lizzie Harkness)  
Sherwood Park, Lockerbie.

11th March 1987

Mrs Oliver, aged 86, lives with her daughter Hazel Oliver. She lived in Kirkpatrick Fleming until her marriage. Miss Oliver helped with the interview, her mother being rather deaf. Mrs Oliver's memory was good, and she gave the impression of enjoying the occasion, which kept her up well beyond her normal bedtime.

School It was a nice school.

Her brothers had been there in Blackie Brown's day. One day they stayed off school to follow the hounds from Mossknow (a favourite occupation for boys). Her mother went to school next day to see what happened. Mr Brown said 'He'd be away with that hooligan gang'.

She would sometimes walk barefoot in summer, but never went barefoot to school. She used to feel sorry for the Poor House children. The girls hair was cropped like boys, and they were all dressed the same, in blue checked clothes. They formed a separate group, not spoken to much by the other children. At Xmas they were given a party.

The school used to complain about people staying off for the Annan Fair, which she never went to. Nor did she get to the soup kitchen. Her mother made her go home. It was usually potato soup, in bowls, made from a big boiler.

Her first teacher, Miss Graham, was tall, grey haired - in a bun, nicely done - and very ladylike. She very quickly got the children to behave as she wanted, and Mrs Oliver never heard anyone say anything bad about her.

She also had Miss McNish, Miss Anderson and Mr Mckerchar, who had a family. At first he was very cross with the minister about operettas, which took time, or concentration off school, but in time they became great friends. Mckerchar was a big, tall man.

Miss Graham's room was divisible by a partition. Rooms were heated by open fires, lit by paraffin lamps hanging from the ceiling.

The next room was 'further down', towards the back door. Then steps went down to the playground.

Among her school-mates were Lizzie Duff, Ben Smith and John Mackie. Lizzie Duff married an Irving from

Eaglesfield, lived in Grahamshill farm cottage. Ben Smith died in World War 2.

McKerchar used the strap a good deal. Mr Christie was a 'tough guy', with a temper.

On leaving Kirkpatrick Fleming she went to Annan Academy, cycling every day. She left at the age of 15 and went to work in an unspecified business in Bretna, but she cycled from home, until she married in 1923. (Lived in Kirkpatrick Fleming until 1928)

I think she said Lou Bell of Broats was also at school with her. (Lou Bell was younger)

NB - If she went to school at 5, Mr Brown would still be the headmaster, although he'd never teach her.

#### Church

Lizzie Harkness's life was very much based on the Church. She spoke of how Mr Walker taught a lot of people the violin - such as John Mackie, organised operettas and eventually officiated at her marriage. She herself took the leading role in 'Red Riding Hood' and 'Cissie in Toyland'. There were quite large casts, including her brother, and Ben Smith (now dead). Mr McKerchar's opposition to the operettas is mentioned above.

Later she sang in the choir along with Ann Finlay and Jessie Moffat. Younger sister Annie Harkness was also in the choir. The organist, David Johnston, lived at Irvington and travelled daily to Annan (by bike, presumably) to work as a watchmaker.

Sunday was quite an 'occasion'. Sunday School, then church, at which the minister always gave an address (a children's address?). At home she might write out all she could remember of what he'd said, and if the writing wasn't good enough it would be done again. After tea was the Bible Class, at which the choir might sing a song/hymn - and then back to bed.

Then on Thursday night choir practice at Church which was 'grand' (others have also remarked on how choir practice was a social event).

Across the road - at the back road - lived John Lamont, an elder, who got a presentation Bible for 50 years eldership. Fairly late on he married. His wife was hardly ever at church. (I think 50 year presentation would be made long after Lizzie Harkness left Kirkpatrick Fleming)

The Lamonts had a horse, 'Donald' which they used to take up the new road to a field opposite Annandale Quarry House and into the Bluebell Wood. ((~~There was a~~  
~~path through the Bluebell Wood~~  
~~between the quarry, the house and the wood,~~  
~~and the house at the time.~~))

Her family sat at the front of the church. Doctor Carruthers used to sit upstairs, and one Sunday when she understood he wasn't coming she went up to sit in his loft - but he did turn up. Fortunately he didn't mind.

Also in the choir was Jim Irving.

Of the other ministers the earliest was Mr Graham, who christened her, but whom she did not remember. Her mother had said he was kind of quiet.

She liked Mr Fyffe, who visited them a lot, and was very nice. He didn't have a lot to say, so it was best to keep talking.

Another choir member was Mat Rogerson. There were too many in the family for the farm, so he went to Canada, and there was a collection for him. Lizzie Harkness and Mrs Walker went to Carlisle to buy his present. He stayed a while in Canada, got married, but later came back.

Her elder was John Lamont. Among other elders she remembered Abel Mitchell, Beattie of Blackyett and, she thought, Doctor Carruthers. There were separate elders for Gair.

Mr Walker worked with animals at a bit of the Glebe by the Poor House. His wife was President of the Guild, which met in the Manse. They had 4 children, including Willie, an architect, who lived in New Abbey Road (and Janet Walker, who married Birdsall of the garage). ax Dod Walker had grocers in Dumfries for a time, red haired, moved south.

Sometimes the Grahams went to the English Church, sometimes the Parish Church.

She once went to a soiree at Pincod. Mrs Gilles, who kept the Post Office, used to walk all the way to Pincod with her family. Mr Donaldson was very nice, but there wasn't a great deal of coming or going to Pincod from the village.

I have a note that her mother went to collect at Gair and Springkell to get more money for the minister. I

think this refers to the fact that Kirkpatrick Fleming had a minimum stipend which had to be supplemented. Mrs Harkness left Kirkpatrick Fleming with her daughter - Lizzie Harkness's sister - soon after Lizzie Harkness herself left in 1928.

See also Economic - Poor House.

Sport and  
Entertainment

Boys used to follow the hounds - see School.

Fergus Graham of Mossknow, a grand scout master, used to organise sports. She was a good runner and once won 3/- (?) prize money, but her mother made her hand it in, presumably in aid of charity.

Her future husband first saw her acting in a play. all the local ministers came too. Her mother, who seems to have been fairly strict in her outlook, never gave her any praise for her acting. In 'Red Riding Hood', the first show, her brother was a woodman, with a wooden axe. He was a bit of a nuisance - kept making her laugh so that for a duet she had to turn her back on him. For 'Cissie' she had a beautiful tussere dress, golden-yellow, which was made by a dressmaker.

She didn't remember the Mossknow Flower Show, but did remember Eaglesfield, at which there were sports, and her mother won so many baking prizes that they asked her not to compete any more. There were sports too. They called it 'the Raw Show'.

At one time a dancing master came to the hall, whom you paid so much for lessons - which she thought they'd have done as well without. Her brother Tom used to come with her to dances, to protect her from any bad company. She (or Tom ?) won a medal for dancing, but gave it away to a lad who admired it, to put on his watch chain. I think his name was Dave Graham. The medal would be for waltzing. She also loved the polka. Dances were organised probably by Mabel and David Richardson. David Richardson may still be alive in South England.

There was no swimming that she knew of in the Kirtle.

There was a tennis court in John Lamont's field.

Economic

There used to be several houses at Merkland, of which only one remains. There were blacksmiths there. The Mastertons (blacksmiths ?) - 2 boys had red hair. The girls were older than Lizzie Harkness - went to Carlisle to work as dressmaker.

